

COLCHESTER INSTITUTE CORPORATION

**Meeting of the
CORPORATION BOARD
held on Thursday 30 April 2025
09.30pm, at the Colchester Campus**

Members:

Alison Andreas – Principal and Chief Executive
Simon Attwood - Governor
Stephanie Bettinson – Governor
Lisa Blake – Corporation Board Chair
Richard Block – Governor
Chris Donovan – Governor
Adam Fair – Staff Governor
Marco Iciek - Governor
Nicola Jay – Staff Governor
Sally Messenger – Corporation Vice Chair
Tim Triffitt – FE Student Governor
Caroline Williams – Governor

In attendance:

Alison Bennett – Head of Governance
Ali Davies – Deputy Principal
Mark Emerson – Vice Principal
Gary Horne – Deputy Chief Executive

- 1. Apologies for Absence**
Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Sanjeev Arya and Lee Bingham. Michael Asare Bediako was not present.
- 2. Any other Urgent Business**
None.
- 3. Declaration of any conflicts of interest**
No member or staff declared any financial, or other interests, in the business to be discussed.
- 4. Minutes**
CIC/25/2/1, Minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2025, were **APPROVED** as a true and accurate record.
- 5. Action Sheet and Matters Arising from the Minutes**
CIC/25/2/2, Action Sheet 2024-25, was received and the actions were noted.

The Chair noted that at the 27 February meeting Governors had requested amendments to the EDI policy and **ASKED** whether these had been made. The Principal confirmed that the amendments had been made, as per the discussions at the meeting, and the document had been published to the College website.

ACTION: Corporation Chair to review the published EDI policy changes as per the 27 February minutes.

Risk Register – due to there having been little movement in the Risk Register since the 27 February meeting it was agreed that the discussions around the Board's risk appetite would take place during the July Board meeting.

ACTION: Corporation Board to discuss risk appetite at the July Board meeting

6. Chair's Action / Announcements

No Chair's actions had been undertaken since the last meeting.

7. 2025-26 Applications and Curriculum Plan – Further Education

A verbal update on the Curriculum plan was provided by the Deputy Principal. This area had been covered in detail during the Governor Development Day on 28 March.

Further to the updates already received, a review of the future T-Level curriculum has now taken place, as part of providing the May 2025 T Level Data Collection to the DfE. Curriculum plan for 2025-26 is currently at:

- Funded 16-18 numbers 4155
- Planned FE numbers 4526
- Total offers (current position) 5193
- In process (current position) an additional 1056

It was explained that conversion rates will vary with some areas being higher than others, as in some subjects in particular there will be applicants holding offers with more than one provider. An example of this is Science where many students also have an application elsewhere to study A Levels. As such the College Executive are not concerned that applications will convert to over 6000 new learners from September 2025 but are optimistic about at least reaching our DfE funded target

Some Curriculum areas can be flexible and responsive to an increased number of learners, however in some areas staffing and resources don't allow that. Areas that are lower on application numbers will be kept under review and monitored.

Governors **ASKED** for clarity on the areas that are lower on numbers. The Deputy Principal explained that those areas are still on, or above target numbers so are not a concern.

Recruitment is taking place for English and Maths teachers with some strong applications having been received.

The Deputy Chief Executive commented that the Curriculum plan is 4526 and funding allocation has been increased to 4155. 2025-26 Adult allocation funding totals have come through in line with this year. The College will need to ensure that the adult offer aligns to the discrete funding lines within the overall adult allocation.

Governors commented on the promising numbers and the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee **ASKED** about uptake at the Braintree campus. The Deputy Principal replied that applications are up equally across both campuses. The Braintree offer is constantly reviewed and there are plans to make better use of the workshops with additional apprenticeship groups, as well as investing in the student experience, including a gym, which it is hoped will encourage Braintree students to attend their local campus. Governors requested an update on learner numbers at the Braintree campus at the October 2025 meeting.

ACTION: Update on learner numbers at the Braintree campus to be provided at the October 2025 meeting.

Governors **ASKED** whether the conversion rate from last year can be tracked in comparison to this year. The Principal said that a conversion rate is applied to every subject based on trends in the past 5 years. This data is then factored into curriculum planning and has been used to calculate the planned number.

Governors **ASKED** whether apprenticeship profiling has taken place. It was confirmed that it has, and start numbers are slightly up, leading to a notable increase in income when combined with funding for continuers.

8. Safeguarding Report

CIC/25/2/3, Safeguarding Report, was received and discussed. It was reported that:

- Staff Safeguarding update including Single Central Record and Disclosure and Barring Service checks indicates 100% compliance.
- Mandatory staff training compliance ranges between 97.8% and 99.6%
- Campus security team are fully staffed and are now able to provide a positive presence around the campuses. A new appointment to the team will enable de-escalation training to be carried out with staff.
- There has been an increase in poor behaviour towards staff by parents/guardians.
- Mental health remains the top theme in terms of student safeguarding incidents with an increase of 10 cases over the same period last year (97 compared to 87) however the breakdown of reported incidents varies from the previous reporting period.
- The College benefits from a counsellor funded by the Integrated Care Board, who have confirmed continued funding with the potential of a 5-year contract.
- Between 10th October and 28th January Colchester security team conducted 8 stop and search searches. In Braintree across the same period 4 searches were carried out.
- Cross college safeguarding update training is planned for the June Staff Development Day.
- Safeguarding audit return has been submitted to the Essex Safeguarding Children's Board.
- Run, hide, tell drill takes place in Braintree next week following the testing of the alarm twice this week.

Governors **ASKED** about the increase in poor behaviour from parents and students. The Deputy Principal replied that there have always been elements of this and following one particularly difficult incident changes and safeguards, for staff, have been put in place. The Safeguarding link Governor said that poor behaviour from parents is a growing issue across educational establishments.

Governors referred to the stop and search incidents and **ASKED** whether a knife arch has been on site. It was confirmed that this took place during the Autumn term.

Governors **ASKED** if the increase being seen in suicidal plans/thoughts/attempts is a national trend. This is a national issue and there is a huge demand for external services, which themselves, have a declining capacity to respond.

It was **ASKED** if the College has seen an increase in drug use. The Deputy Principal said that the college hold a firm line with drugs and alcohol on site and if learners are found to have either, a summary exclusion will be issued.

Governors **ASKED** whether the mandatory training figures includes Governors. The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the figure excludes Governors however the Governors' training rate is regularly reported to the Finance and Resources Committee.

9. Risk Register Summary Report

The Board received a verbal update on the Corporate Risk Register. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that no risk rank scores have changed since this was last reviewed by the Board. Although it was also highlighted that there are some very positive signs around impact of some of the task and finish actions. The Board were taken through the top three risks:

1. Staff Recruitment, especially in the hard-to-reach curriculum delivery areas. The new People Operations Manager is making positive progress and following a tender process new Talent Acquisition software has been purchased which will integrate with existing software as well as support auto posting to key vacancy advert sites such as TES and FE Jobs. The vacancies section of the website will be brought back in house allowing focus to be given to priority areas and a new shadow jobs microsite has already resulted in considerably higher engagement with potential new staff.
2. Delivery space, linked to the accommodation and estates strategy. This is being examined for September readiness and significant work is being done on timetabling and efficiency.
3. Staff retention. The March People and Culture dashboard report highlighted that the annual rolling staff turnover rate had dropped to 13%. (March 2024: 19%) Whilst it is recognised that this is a positive move in the right direction leaders are aware that more can be done.

Governors **ASKED** if there are any concerns, regarding risk, that the Board need to be aware of. The Deputy Chief Executive assured the Board that there are no new areas of concern on the current version of the Corporate Risk Register.

Governors **ASKED** what rate of staff turnover is considered acceptable/ comparable with other institutions. The Deputy Chief Executive said the target likely to be recommended for adoption will be 10% in the 2025-26 academic year. The new Director of People and Culture is data driven and new reports will include a segregation of Teaching and Business staff turnover as well as by area. The Principal and Chief Executive said that the latest turnover data she was aware of for the sector nationally was around 17%. The Deputy Principal said that changes to the Teaching and Learning Observation process have been made, which as a result has led to changes to New to Teaching and the New to Teaching at Colchester Institute to develop staff confidence and hopefully help with teaching staff retention. Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee provided assurance to the Board that staff turnover is being monitored by the committee, with individual areas being looked at in detail.

10. Equity Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2023-24

CIC/25/2/4, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2023-24, was received. The Principal took the meeting through the document explaining that it is a retrospective report that covers issues relating to both staff and students. Changes to EDI figures – in particular, positive progress on workforce diversity, were highlighted along with the section on CPD which is new to the report for this year.

Governors' attention was brought to the conclusion of the report which states the College and Board's commitment to the Association of Colleges Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Charter. The action plan to support the statement is due to be finalised by the EDI Committee.

Governors **ASKED** whether the Curriculum and Quality Committee (CQC) had considered the achievement and retention gaps and whether the committee had received any benchmarking data in respect of that. The CQC Chair assured the Board that over the past 18 months the achievement and retention gaps have been increasingly scrutinised by the committee and targets have been set which have been agreed by the committee. The progress being made is rapid however, this is an area of continued focus for the committee.

Governors **QUESTIONED** the limited list of protected characteristics in the document. The Principal explained that data is very incomplete around some protected characteristics for staff and that there needs to be a clear reason for data to be collected and to only collect data that will be used. Governors requested that further protected characteristics be looked at with a view to considering whether data on them should be collected, and what would be done with that data if collected.

ACTION: Data collected on Protected Characteristics to be reviewed, with any additional data collected to be included in the 2024-25 report.

The Chair commented on the usefulness of the report which contains a positive story, that supports positive trend and movement.

Discussion took place around Staff profiling and whether there is a need to be concerned about age profiling in terms of succession planning. It was explained that staffing is looked at and succession planning conversations take place locally with the Business Partners.

DECISION: The Board **APPROVED** the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2023-24 subject to the addition of a heading within the achievement gaps section, to show next steps and one or two typographical corrections.

11. Reports from Committees

11.1. Curriculum and Quality Committee (CQC)

CIC/25/2/5, report from Chair of the Committee, was received by the Board. The Committee Chair reported that:

- It was a very full meeting with detailed reports and discussion that informed Governors. Several reports identified that significant progress is being made post Ofsted Inspection, with most performance data presented on or above target. Area of concern to the Committee is the performance of vulnerable learners especially those with a declared disability.
- Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The Committee heard about the data and the actions that are moving the data forward.
- A comprehensive report on safeguarding was received. The report provided Governors with reassurance that all learners and apprentices are being effectively safeguarded. Leaders are now presenting data on safeguarding cases split by campus, age, gender, those learners who declare a disability and difficulty and those who do not.
- The outcomes of the teaching and learning survey provided Governors with valuable information in terms of learner voice. The outcomes were mostly positive with some variation between FE curriculum areas and questions. The increase in satisfaction rates for apprentices is significant.

The Chair commented that the College Executive continues to go from strength to strength, and the Board is going from strength to strength with a lot of momentum to continue to drive forward.

11.2. Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)

CIC/25/2/06, report from the Chair of the Committee, was received. It was reported that:

- Internal Audit attended the meeting and took the Committee through the current progress report (SICA March 2025). Within term 2, learner experience, payroll and cyber were all planned to be undertaken, alongside a review of maths and English.
- The Payroll report is in the draft stage and cyber security audit is underway. Internal Audit assured the Board that these reviews are on track to be completed as planned, with nothing significant to raise at this point.
- The learner experience review has been completed, with the final report issued in January. This has provided substantial assurance, with two routine recommendations raised. The committee took comfort that there were no urgent or important recommendations arising.
- The latest risk register was reviewed following the risk committee sitting on 25 February 2025. Reviewing the risks, it was noted that staff recruitment and retention remain significant. The Board were satisfied that there are numerous actions being taken in response to seek to mitigate the risk but ultimately the pay gap to industry sectors remains. The Committee challenged whether there was a risk that the College would not be able to deliver courses in September 2025, due to either staffing or suitable space, but were reasonably satisfied at this juncture that the College had suitable options in place to minimise this risk.

11.3. Finance and Resources Committee (FRC)

CIC/25/2/07, report from the Chair of the Committee, was received. It was reported that:

- The Committee received a report that following the announcement of the Crown Guarantee, and swift action by the Deputy Chief Executive the College would benefit from a reduction in costs related to the Local Government Pension Scheme. This is as a result of the secondary rate of contribution (annual deficit payment) being removed entirely from 01/02/2025. This presents an in-year saving of £58.5k and a full year saving of £122k for 2025-26.
- CIC/25/2/8, Monthly Management report, was reviewed for the current financial year and the Committee tested the underlying assumptions and forecasts. At this stage a 655K net surplus is forecast by the end of the financial year. When considered with other key financial health indicators this would bring the College into a Good Financial Health rating. The Committee registered thanks on behalf of the Board for the hard work of all College staff for the progress made in restoring the College's financial position following several difficult years.
- People and Culture Key Priorities were presented, and it was noted that the key indicators the Committee had been previously concerned about (sickness and turnover) were showing good improvement.
- Annual Wellbeing report was reviewed, and it was concluded that the College offered a really positive range of support for staff wellbeing, but that this work was being further developed. It was recognised the contribution this has to the improvements in staff sickness and turnover referred also referred to in the report.
- CIC/25/2/9, Annual Course Contributions report, was reviewed by the Committee with a particular focus on areas with a negative net financial contribution. The Committee concluded that course contributions need to be considered alongside a range of other factors such as space/equipment requirements, course quality and skills requirements of the local economy. The FRC Chair questioned whether other committees are aware of the Annual

Course Contributions document. It was agreed that the key quality KPIs will be discussed at a Board briefing session at the July meeting.

ACTION: Annual Course Contributions, KPIs/ balanced score card to be discussed at a Board Briefing session before the July meeting.

Governors **ASKED** about unfilled vacancies and whether those vacancies are having a negative impact on Learner experience. The Deputy Principal replied saying it is difficult to say, but the College does try to cover any vacancies with existing staff, using agency staff only where there is no alternative.

- CIC/25/2/10, Estates and Accommodation Strategy, was presented and reviewed. The revised strategy recognised the good progress made since this was last considered, but also identifies the significant challenges ahead. The Committee noted the condition of accommodation and overall capacity at Colchester and that demand for extra space for some courses are key challenges. It was also concluded that campus utilisation at Braintree could be improved. The College masterplan sets out a path to respond to identified challenges, but significant capital investment will be required over the longer term. Due to the significance of the strategy and interdependencies with all other aspects of the College the committee felt it needed to be also considered by the board following some suggested amendments.

Governors **ASKED** if there is capacity within the Finance team to carry out good quality bid writing, as this will be key to the success of securing funding for the projects. It was agreed that this should be kept under review when more information about potential large scale funding becomes available as this will be relatively new territory for the DfE Capital team.

The Deputy Chief Executive requested approval for limited funding to be spent upfront to support the design and survey process of a transformational new building on the Colchester Campus. It was agreed that this would be discussed at the May meeting of the FRC.

ACTION: Approval of funds to support the design and survey process to be discussed at the 20 May FRC meeting.

DECISION: The Board **APPROVED** the Estates and Accommodation Strategy April 2025.

The Board thanked the Deputy Chief Executive for his work on a very comprehensive Estates and Accommodation strategy and for making the updates following discussion at the Finance and Resources Committee.

12. Policy Review

The following policy was presented for approval:

- CIC/25/2/11, Prevent Policy

It was explained that the policy had been presented to the April CQC where amendments had been requested by the Committee. Following the amendments the Safeguarding link Governor had reviewed the document and informed the Board that it meets all requirements and recommended it for approval.

It was **QUESTIONED** whether the term resources should be used rather than premises. It was agreed that the term premises would be changed to resources/ premises.

DECISION: The Board **APPROVED** the Prevent Policy subject to the addition of the term 'resources' to the document.

13. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting will be held on Thursday 22 July 2025 at 4.30pm. The meeting will be preceded with a Board briefing at 4.00pm.